

HAROLD A. LETT
87 SPRUCE STREET
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

May 1, 1967

Mr. H. A. Clem
New Jersey Bell Telephone Co.,
540 Broad Street
Newark, N. J.

Returned, edited
+ resubmitted
8/14/67

Dear Mr. Clem:

I am not entirely sure whether this material is supposed to come to you as chairman of the Handbook Committee, or to Stan Moran as chairman of Promotion and Publicity. Nevertheless, here it is in its rough, almost illegible form. I send it to you thusly with apologies for myself and the committee; it happens that not one of us has access to office, secretaries or clerks, and all the typing of the original MSS was done on this beat-up old portable of mine.

As indicated in the opening paragraph, this chronological report was gleaned from various records in the League files, and is the result of reading reams of old faded, dusty records. No attempt was made to include any intimate color or human interest effects - we the committee believe the record is sufficiently dramatic, no matter what use is to be made of it. However, we do feel that several old members of the organization may be able to respond to personal interview in a way that would impart color and drama, if it is to be used in story-effect manner. In such event, I would strongly recommend the following persons, in the order of listing, as responsive and knowledgeable persons:

Wm. M. Ashby, first Executive Secretary
Dr. L. Hamilton Garner, long-time president
and husband of a U.L. Guild founder
Archie H. Ormond, long time-president
Myself
Dr. Julius Levy, very long-time Board member
Mrs. Anna Monroe, one of founders of the
Phyllis Wheatley Home

It would be the hope of this sub-committee that, if clerical help is available, this chronicle be redone in clean, reorganized fashion, so that it may become a part of the permanent archives of the Urban League, when it has served its purpose for the 50th Anniversary. Meantime, I shall be shuttling about a great deal from now on. Until June 8th, I may be found here, or at Sag Harbor, L.I. N.Y. Phones: here 248-2163; S.H. 516-725-1668. Call me if needed.

Yours,



P.S. Out of the country from
June 11 to Aug 15th!
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CHRONICLE OF URBAN LEAGUE ACTIVITIES
1917 - 1952

During the period embraced in this chronicle, rather clear records have been obtainable in the form of Annual Reports, and in detailed minutes of Board and Executive Committee sessions between 1917 and 1940. Minutes from 1940 to date without doubt are available in the offices of the Urban League, but are not included in the bound volumes of minutes covering the period initially mentioned. A record of comparable data is being supplied the committee by the present Executive Secretary of the Essex County Urban League.

In this Chronicle, an attempt is made to list every incident or accomplishment denoting the nature of Urban League efforts, without applying value judgments on the part of the reporter:

1917-Jan'y The Negro Welfare League was organized this year as the immediate forerunner of the N.J. Urban League. Formed "to carry on welfare work for negroes (sic) and to improve their social, economic and moral conditions in urban communities throughout the state", approximately 100 members elected as their first officers: Augustus V. Hamburg, president; Rev. Oravia M. Bonfield, Newark and Dr. George E. Cannon, Jersey City, vice-presidents; Rev. John D. Bolden, secretary; and Arthur W. McDougall, treasurer. The major important task to which the new organization addressed itself was the operation of the Friendly Visitors Committee, for visitation and counselling of newly-arrived migrant families from the South. *at 249 Mulberry St. as first office, owned by the children of first society*
~~Mr. Wm. Ashby named as the first Urban League Executive~~

1917-Sept. The Negro Welfare League became officially affiliated with the League on Urban Condition among Negroes, later the National Urban League. Embraced in the newly named organization was the Phyllis Wheatley Association, formed for the purpose of giving help, advice and counsel to the many unattached young Negro women coming to north Jersey on the migrant tide. The Rev. Davis Lusk was the first president of this organization.

1918 The newly designated N.J. Urban League purchased its new home at 212 Bank Street, later renumbered as 58 West Market Street, and engaged as its first Executive Secretary Mr. William Ashby. The complex operation of raising funds, arranging housing for new arrivals, supervising the work of the Friendly Visitors Committee and the Phyllis Wheatley Home now located in the new Bank Street building, and making industrial contacts and placement of Negro workers, were but part of the duties imposed upon Mr. Ashby.

1919 First employment inroads with large industries such as Crucible Steel, Hyatt Roller Bearing, Worthington Pump, etc.; also in the Toy and Leather Industries.

Took leading role in establishing the first branch of Y.W.C.A., the Sojourner Truth Branch in Newark.

Placed the first Negro elevator operator in Newark department stores - L. Bamberger and Kresge.

Received in employment the first industrial secretary of the N.J. Urban League in the person of Lester B. Granger, demobilized First Lieutenant, U.S. Army - later National Executive Director of the League; onetime President of the National Conference of Social Work and of the International Conference of Social Work.

1920 Formed the first Negro Student Council of high school students in the Essex County area; Mrs. Gladys Churchman of Friendly Neighborhood fame in later years, one of those involved in the Council activities as a high school student.

1921-22 Employment breakthrough in the Garment industry, specifically Sigmund Eisner; Cigars, J. H. Lewis Cigar Co.; Meat Packing Chemical, Shipbuilding and Railroad track repair.

Urban League executive one of original founders (perhaps the lone survivor) of the Community Chest of Newark
Dr. Julius Levinson, then leader of effort placed first Negro Child Hygiene Unit, Florence Van Blotke

1922 Negro community of north Jersey plagued by rash of inflammatory news stories of "Southern Negroes coming to New Jersey in search of relief grants." Urban League worked with publishers for securing more responsible and factual reporting.
N.J. State Police advised by the League to place a Negro Educational Society

1923 Through League efforts, and favorable response of City Commissioner Brennan, the first Negro police officer named to the Newark Police Force.

1924-26 Negro workers introduced by Urban League into the Brick Manufacturing industry of Sayreville, N. J.
First Negro Caseworker added to Urban League staff, for work with Negro migrant families and to serve as liaison between Negro community and established Caseworking agencies in Essex County.

Urban League cooperated with local Negro leadership in forming two "self-help" business organizations: the Afro-American Realty Company which engaged on a modest scale in buying and rehabilitating houses for occupancy by Negro workers' families; and the Peoples' Finance Corporation for extending loans to Negro families for home-buying and other basic needs. Both firms were casualties of the '29 crash.

Urban League initiated activities leading to the establishment of the Friendly Neighborhood House in the Third Ward.

1927-30 In cooperation with the Prudential Insurance Company, League executive served as consultant in social planning stages of new middle-class Negro housing development now known as Douglass-Harrison Apartments in Newark's Central Ward.

In 1930, Urban League secured placement of first Negro clerks in A. & P. Stores, leading to appointment of first Negro store manager.

1933 Urban League executive selected by Prudential Insurance Company as manager of the new Douglass-Harrison Apartments.

In cooperation with principal of Warren Street School, Miss Mae Shepard, and committee of Newark women, League began serving hot lunches to approximately 100 Central Ward Negro children each school day, project lasting for three years.

Third floor apartment of League building, equipped and converted to Domestic Training School, under ~~ERA~~ *ERA (Emergency Relief Admin.)* auspices

1934 Urban League Social worker assigned to Essex County Juvenile Court in Pilot project for aid to Negro children and youth for whom no remedial facilities existed. Project continued until 1939 at Urban League cost, without financial aid from County ~~or other sources~~ or other sources than Community Chest.

Negro clerks, stenographers and interviewers place for first time in Emergency Relief offices in Essex and other northern New Jersey counties.

League placed trained Negro social worker as executive worker in State headquarters of the ERA Relief Department, thus opening the way for subsequent placement of Negro caseworkers and supervisors in many counties throughout the State.
(Works Progress Admin.)

Demise of ERA and advent of WPA led to State conferences by U.L. executive. Agreements worked out as to overall employment of and consideration for Negro workers on all levels, leading to issuance of state-wide orders on non-discrimination on staff and program activities. This agreement was not respected as ~~ERA~~ developed into a working organization, and changes occurred in top personnel.

First Negro administrative staff workers assigned in the Re-employment Division of the N.J. Labor Department, later to become the U.S. Employment Service and the N.J. Employment Service. *The second such placement was Mrs. Anna P. Gooda, ~~current~~ chairman of the 50th Anniv. Comm.*

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CONTAINING CONTENT

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1935- Urban League designed and submitted to WPA a project for training and assigning Visiting Housekeepers, as an outlet for Negro women workers in Essex County. These women would visit the homes of the sick, the infirm, the elderly and others needing housekeeping aid, and give necessary cleaning, meal preparation, child care under strict conditions and supervision. This project was not received as from the Urban League, but in 1937 it appeared as an active program under WPA auspices.

League arranged with Tuberculosis League and others, for admission of first Negro physicians (2) for latest treatment practices training. This first admission later increased to four physicians.

1936 Urban League executive designed and had accepted by WPA three different research projects, for employment of Negro white-collar workers for whom no kind of project had been opened to this time. These were: (a) Study of Employment Opportunities of Negro Workers in New Jersey Industry; (b) Study of Extent and Nature of Negro Business in N.J.; and (c) Opportunities for White-Collar Employment for Negroes. This last-named project was re-designed by the National Urban League and became a nation-wide project, the N.J. Urban League executive becoming State supervisor and later having a month's assignment in Nashville, Tenn. for shaping of final reports.

Formed the Essex County Workers Council with 90 Building Trades Laborers and Craftsmen in the initial response. Group became an effective, hard-hitting League Auxiliary for several years, and until Depression roadblocks yielded to the later War upswing in building and industry.

1937 Visiting Housekeeper project provided work for 100 Negro and 100 white women; Negro supervisor of project.

First Negro District Supervisor in the Newark Department of Public Welfare appointed due to Urban League representations.

First Negro ~~librarian~~ librarian appointed by Newark Public Library after months of negotiation with Urban League

1938 Urban League set up training classes for Negro candidates for first Newark Police examination held in 12 years. Eight finalists rejected by Civil Service Health Examiners for possession of "flat feet". Nation-wide publicity on resulting fight to protect right of competition for Negroes, many of whom have congenital flat-foot - declared by scientists to be the strongest and most efficient foot. N.J. Civil Service Commission rejected overwhelming testimony, and all Negro candidates. Quietly abandoned this item as a disqualifying disability, at a much later date.

1939 Through Urban League work, first Negro attorney-at-law admitted to membership in the Essex County Bar Association. Urban League led the fight which resulted in breaking down existing barriers preventing Negro auto drivers from having Automobile Liability Insurance, in N.J.

1940 With cooperation of Governor, State officials and industrialists, assembled a state-wide conference in Trenton on employment of Negro workers in Defense Industries in New Jersey. Data from the Employment Survey of 1936 proved to be an impressive presentation. Governor Edison and UCC Director Harold Hoffman speakers.

First Negro trainees in machine practices accepted in Essex County Vocational Training School, as part of Defense Training program, an Urban League effort.

Advent of a number of Negro college-trained personnel in social-work profession, led Urban League to organize the Negro Social Workers Round Table, a luncheon-club for self-help.

1941 Urban League executive appointed to Newark Defense Council and to N.J. State Fair Rent Committee in Defense Housing; and served as New Jersey coordinator of the proposed March-on-Washington to demonstrate against widespread discrimination against Negro workers in Defense industries.

First six Negro workers in Bell Telephone Company as janitors; Negro workers introduced by Urban League in: National Union Radio, Western Union; Walter Kidde & Co., Thomas Edison Co., Westinghouse, American Transformer, Tung-Sol Lamp Co., Breeze Corporation, Isolantite Corp'n.

Urban League and local Negro leadership organized demonstrations against the traditional ban against Negro physicians, nurses and nurse trainees at Newark City Hospital.

Other firms admitting Negro workers for first time: Western Electric Co., Oxweld Acetylene, Brewster Aeronautical Corp., Otis Elevator Co., Titeflex Metal Hose Co., RCA., Curtis-Wright; all through Urban League work.

1942 Through Urban League endeavors, Essex County WPA accepted first Negro female trainees in power machine operation, and Negro men in airplane sheetmetal work, opening hitherto closed fields of employment to tens of thousands to follow.

League Industrial Secretary employed by Curtis-Wright in personnel department, first move of this sort in North Jersey industry.

Through appeal to Federal officials, discriminatory practices of N.J. Employment Services brought in the open and regulated. Similarly, through Washington contacts and Essex County appeals, assured Negro workers right to transfer with the Office of Dependency Benefits from Washington to Newark. Intensive work in finding homes an essential responsibility of the Urban League.

Urban League cited 30 north Jersey industrial firms in 54 separate complaints of discriminatory practices, in connection with new Federal Fair Employment Practices Commissions hearings in Newark, accelerating policy changes leading to greater employment opportunity for Negro workers.

1943 Urban League designed and distributed, with financial aid from Negro businesses and organizations, 20,000 "Can You Hold Your Job" pamphlets, to inspire more serious attention to job habits and public department of Negro workers. Permission given to the Pittsburgh Courier which subsequently printed and distributed nationally several hundred thousand of this folder, through use of original plates.

A Negro Citizens' Council, organized by the Urban League, participated in a county-wide conference called by their instigation by the Prosecutor of the County. Purpose: to bring together business, labor, government, educational and Negro leadership for a consideration of "white backlash" due to city crime rate and greater friction between Negro and white communities.

Organized a Citizens' Committee on Racial Unity to counter-act conditions growing out of north-side team-age riot resulting in two deaths. Newark Council on Intergroup Relations, later Essex County Intergroup Council, the direct and early outgrowth of this and two earlier interracial groups, also formed by the Urban League.

1944 Employed a Neighborhood Secretary after a long lapse of this work; number of Neighborhood Units formed for development of good house-keeping habits, neighborhood improvement and child care.

Successfully induced Newark Board of Health to use public health statistics in such a way as to remove racial connotations of morbidity and mortality reports.

Worked cooperatively in spearheading drive for New Jersey legislative action for Fair Employment Act, leading to establishment in July 1945 of the N.J. Division against Discrimination. This Division shares with New York the honor of being the first such state bodies in the nation, both beginning operation on July 1st, 1945.

1945 Through Urban League efforts, first Negro girls placed as operators with N.J. Bell Telephone Co. L

League conducted studies, at request of local management, of absenteeism and personnel turnover of Negro employees.

After long conference on the issue, induced Newark Public Library to remove from its actively-promoted reading shelves, twenty-six racially biased pre-school children's books for many years considered "American classics."

Urban League Guild and Council of N.J. Urban Leagues organized by N.J. Urban League in Newark.

1946 League ascertained that one-third of all post-war layoffs in the Newark metropolitan area were Negroes.

Participated in state-wide Veterans conference; induced placement of first Negro counsellor-trainees (2) in the Veterans Administration in N.J.; counselled 93 Negro war veterans to enter training courses for Police, Firemen and Postal Clerk examinations.

First Negro bus driver for Public Service employed through League efforts. First Negro linesman, a war veteran, employed by Bell Tel.

1947 Urban League sold its building at 58 West Market st., abandoned the Phyllis Wheatley Home operation, and moved to its new home at 58 Jones Street; U.L. Guild raised \$20,000 to make this possible.

Inaugurated its third Police recruit training program for Negro candidates for Newark Police Department placement; several were successful. Organized an Emergency Committee on Fire Hazards for greater fire prevention education in Newark Central wards.

1947 Urban League "pilot placements" in unusual occupations (for Negro workers in New Jersey) produced the following job situations:

1952 to Engineers (electrical, electronics, mechanical, chemical); accountant, draftsman, machinists, radio technician, salesman (stocks, brewery, auto, advertising, appliances), cartoonist, private detective, personnel director, dietician, business machine operator and bank clerk.

Cooperated with Essex County TB Association to aid in bringing over 10,000 Negro citizens into chest examinations.

Worked with Essex County Intergroup Council in influencing the Newark Housing Authority to abandon its segregated housing policies.

Information acquired and submitted by Urban League led to FHA approval of a builder's plan to construct middle-class housing for Negroes in Newark.

Worked for insertion of strong civil rights plank in the New Jersey proposed State Constitution; and for strengthening of the New Jersey Civil Rights Law.

*April 1967
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*Note reverse order
of chronology*

SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE URBAN LEAGUE PROGRAM
FOR THE THIRTEEN YEAR PERIOD 1954-1967

- 1967 Completed a study of the 22 nursing homes in Essex County in order to determine what services and facilities were available to Negro residents without restrictions based upon race.
- 1966 Developed and implemented the Management Seminar on equal employment opportunity and conducted the first such Seminar by training 30 middle management executives at P. Ballantine & Son in understanding the non-white worker and how to effectively provide for him equality of opportunity in employment.
- The Urban League of Essex County was the first Urban League in the country to develop such a program.
- 1965 In 1965, the Urban League of Essex County was one of five local affiliates selected by National office as most representative of Urban League programming and achievement.
- As a result of this citation, the League was invited to make a presentation of its activities at the 1965 Annual Conference of the National Urban League held in Miami Beach, Florida, in August of 1965.
- 1965 In 1965, the Urban League of Essex County registered 4,543 job applicants, referred 4,231 to job openings and placed 1318 persons. Except for the previous year 1964, when the League registered 5,566 applicants, this was the highest period of economic development and employment activities conducted by the League in its recorded history.
- 1964 The Urban League of Essex County, on a grant of \$18,000.00 from the Greater Newark Development Council, developed and initiated a sensitivity leadership training program for a cross-section of the Negro community from which was graduated 40 persons, most of whom now occupy obvious leadership positions in the community. This community leadership program was the first conducted on this basis by any other social agency in the community.

- 1964 The Urban League of Essex County, in cooperation with the Newark Housing Authority, undertook a program to train and place 500 local residents who live in facilities owned or supervised by the Newark Housing Authority. Between January 1 and September of 1965, 420 of the estimated 500 local residents between the ages of 16 and 30 years were actually recruited, trained and placed.
- 1963 In the summer of 1963, the Urban League of Essex County became one of the founders of the Newark Business and Industrial Coordinating Council (BICC)
- In its first two years of operation, it developed more than 5000 jobs for Puerto Ricans and other non-whites. The Urban League, as the major placement unit of the BICC, has filled, through direct referrals, more than one-fifth of the total number of jobs developed by the BICC during these two years.
- Ever since its inception, the BICC, whose membership is made up of a coalition of business, industrial, and civil rights groups, has been considered all across the nation as a most unusual organization.
- To date, many communities have formed organizations patterned after the BICC in the hope of meeting their local interracial problems as successfully as the BICC has met its in the City of Newark.
- 1963 In June of 1963, the Urban League of Essex County, co-sponsored with the American Friends Service Committee, an organization called CHOICE (Clearing House: Opportunities for Integrating Communities).
- CHOICE has, since its implementation, assisted more than 300 non-white home seekers in securing housing facilities of their choice in suburban Essex and other nearby suburban communities.
- 1963 In 1963, the Urban League conceived, developed and had funded through the Victoria Foundation, its current Skills Bank Program, which has been in current and continuous operation since its founding.
- To date (April 1, 1967) the Skills Bank Program has placed approximately 2500 non-white job applicants into positions they would not have had, had it not been for the efforts and activities of the Skills Bank project.

1961

In October of 1961, the Urban League of Essex County prepared a detailed confidential memorandum on six problem areas in the City of Newark and submitted this document to the Mayor of the City for discussion with the business community. The five items covered in the Memorandum were (1) employment (2) education and training (3) housing (4) welfare services and (5) intergroup tensions in the City.

The document, dated October 19, 1961, presented detailed information and data on each of these five areas and made the five following recommendations:

- (1) that much wider use be made by the Newark Board of Education of provisions in the National Defense Education Act,
- (2) That an expanded and effective course in occupational information be reintroduced to the Newark school curriculum,
- (3) That special attention be given to dropouts before graduation in an effort to reduce the 35 per cent dropout rate now existing in our community,
- (4) That an expanded vocational guidance and counseling program, which would be accompanied by detailed supplementary instructions, including human relations, for vocational guidance counsellors and teachers with guidance responsibility, be established in the Newark school system,
- (5) That local business and industry would find it profitable to undertake retraining and re-educational programs, fully available to Negroes, to obtain maximum advantage of the potential of the local labor force.

Had these recommendations been followed, many of the vexing problems existing in the City of Newark today would be substantially mitigated.

These recommendations may find some implementation thru Newark Anti-Poverty Act

1960

In 1960, the Urban League of Essex County undertook an adoption program designed to find adoptive homes for some 500 Negro children residing in public and private institutions.

During the course of this program, more than 500 adoptive homes were recruited and the list made available to both public and private adoption and child care agencies in the area.

Recruitment of these adoptive homes were carried on through the use of brochures, pamphlets, radio and television announcements, newspaper publicity, tea parties and speaking engagements.

An attempt was made by the League to sell this service to the State. The State, however, determined that it would carry on the program itself and, therefore, declined the services of the Agency. It should be pointed out that the State never functioned successfully in this field.

1959

In 1959, the Urban League of Essex County played a prominent role in organizing the New Jersey Committee Against Discrimination in Housing.

The first office of the Committee was set up in the Urban League headquarters and the Executive Director of the Urban League became the first official Executive Director of this Committee.

1956

In November of 1956, the Urban League of Essex County organized the Central Ward Neighborhood Conference in which over 200 residents of the Central Ward in Newark participated.

The Conference tackled six major problems in the area. These were (1) schools, (2) municipal services (3) housing (4) recreation (5) welfare services and (6) intergroup relations.

Out of the deliberations of this Conference came a report with 52 recommendations for improving the working and living conditions in Newark's Central Ward.

These recommendations were forwarded to municipal officials and to private and social agencies for study and implementation.

This conference was an early forerunner of the Area Board concept and the idea of stimulating social action at the grass roots level.

1956

In 1956, the League also organized a new project "Jobs for Teens" in which a group of 31 teen-agers, members of the Leaguers, were organized to conduct a survey and find placements as a summer

demonstration project.

Fifty-three establishments were surveyed. Fourteen jobs were developed and 14 placements were made.

This was a true demonstration of the self-help technique employed in stimulating and motivating young people to help themselves in developing a career.

1955 During the year 1956, 5 out of every 10 persons referred to jobs by the Urban League were placed. Included in these placements were the first three Negro Circulation Supervisors ever hired by the Newark Evening News; the first Negro Tabulating Machine Operator hired by the National State Bank; the first two clerical workers ever hired by the Newark office of Dun & Bradstreet; the first clerical worker by the Krueger Brewing Company, and the first four Route Salesmen in New Jersey ever hired by the Dugan Brothers Baking Company, a major baking company. All told, 150 job applicants were placed in professional, clerical, skilled, sales and semi-skilled occupations.

1954 The Urban League of Essex County in 1955, participated with the Non-Partisan Committee for a State Medical-Dental School and Health Center.

It urged support for such an institution and distributed literature by the Committee urging the establishment of such an institution in Newark.

*April 1967
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